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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4555

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, GR
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON CONSTANTINE
TSATSOS, NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF GREECE

1. CONSTANTINE TSATSOS WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC ON JUNE 19, 1975 BY THE GREEK PARLIAMENT (SEPTEL). TSATSOS, WHO WILL BE 76 YEARS OF AGE ON JULY 1, HAS BEEN A DEPUTY-AT-LARGE OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY SINCE DECEMBER 1974. A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS, TSATSOS WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE AND WAS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR SHEPHERDING THE CONSTITUTION THROUGH THE PARLIAMENT.

2. TSATSOS, A RESPECTED INTELLECTUAL, WAS BORN IN ATHENS IN 1899 INTO AN UPPER MIDDLE CLASS ATHENIAN FAMILY. HE STUDIED LAW, ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE AT BOTH THE UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS AND AT HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY IN GERMANY. HE SERVED A BRIEF STINT AS SECRETARY TO THE GREEK DELEGATION AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE IN 1919. BETWEEN 1924 AND 1929, TSATSOS PRACTICED LAW IN ATHENS WITH CONSIDERABLE
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SUCCESS AND PUBLISHED A NUMBER OF ACADEMIC TREATISES.

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AMONG THE LATTER, "THE PROBLEM OF THE INTERPRETATION
OF LAW" IS CONSIDERED A CLASSIC.

3. FROM 1930 UNTIL 1946 TSATSOS TAUGHT AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF ATHENS WHERE HE WAS RECOGNIZED BOTH AS AN OUTSTANDING
LAW PROFESSOR AND AS AN EMINENT AUTHOR OF MANY SCHOLARLY
ARTICLES AND BOOKS. DURING THAT PERIOD, HE WAS
PROFESSOR OF MANY STUDENTS WHO ARE CURRENTLY SERVING IN
THE GREEK PARLIAMENT AS DEPUTIES. HE RESIGNED FROM
THE FACULTY OF ATHENS UNIVERSITY IN 1946 IN ORDER TO
ENTER POLITICS. HE WAS IMMEDIATELY SUCCESSFUL, BEING
ELECTED DEPUTY FROM ATHENS IN THAT YEAR ON THE NATIONAL
UNION PARTY TICKET. HE SUBSEQUENTLY BECAME AFFILIATED
WITH THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THEN IN 1956 JOINED THE
NATIONAL RADICAL UNION (ERE) HEADED BY CONSTANTINE
CARAMANLIS. HE WAS REPEATEDLY ELECTED AS AN ERE
DEPUTY FROM 1956 THROUGH 1964.

4. IN THE COURSE OF HIS POLITICAL CAREER, TSATSOS
HAS HELD MANY MINISTERIAL POSITIONS INCLUDING MINISTER
OF THE AIR FORCE (1946); MINISTER OF EDUCATION (1950);
UNDERSECRETARY FOR COORDINATION (1951); MINISTER TO
THE PRIME MINISTER (1956-1961); MINISTER OF SOCIAL
WELFARE (1962-1963); AND MINISTER OF HEALTH (APRIL 1967).

5. AFTER THE FALL OF THE SEVEN YEAR MILITARY DICTATOR-
SHIP AND WITH THE RETURN OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS
IN JULY 1974, TSATSOS RESUMED HIS POLITICAL CAREER
WHEN HE WAS DESIGNATED A DEPUTY-AT-LARGE OF CARAMANLIS'
NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY. WHEN PARLIAMENT CONVENED
FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS, TSATSOS WAS IMME-
DIATELY NAMED TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THAT BODY
BRIEFLY. MUCH OF HIS TIME SINCE THEN HAS BEEN DEVOTED
TO GUIDING THE NATION'S NEW CONSTITUTION THROUGH
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE UNTIL ITS FINAL ACCEPTANCE
EARLIER THIS MONTH. TSATSOS IS WIDELY RESPECTED IN
PARLIAMENT AS AN ACADEMICIAN (ELECTED AS ONE OF THE
"SIXTY IMMORTALS" OF THE PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMY OF
ATHENS IN 1961), AN INTELLECTUAL, A LAWYER AND A
PRACTICAL POLITICIAN.
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6. ON A PERSONAL NOTE TSATSOS IS MARRIED TO IOANNA
(NEE SEFERIADES) THE SISTER OF GEORGE SEFERIS WHO WAS
ONE OF GREECE'S MOST RENOWNED POETS AND A WINNER OF THE
NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE IN 1963. MRS. TSATSOS,
HERSELF AN AUTHOR, HAS WRITTEN A BIOGRAPHY OF HER
BROTHER ENTITLED "MY BROTHER GEORGE SEFERIS".
BOTH TSATSOS AND HIS WIFE HAVE FOR MANY YEARS BEEN

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INFLUENTIAL INTELLECTUAL LEADERS IN ATHENIAN SOCIETY AND HAVE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE CULTURAL AND LITERARY LIFE OF GREECE. TSATSOS SPEAKS ENGLISH, FRENCH, ITALIAN AND GERMAN IN ADDITION TO HIS NATIVE GREEK. THE TSATSOS COUPLE HAS TWO DAUGHTERS.

7. OVER HIS LONG CAREER, TSATSOS HAS BEEN BASICALLY CONSIDERED AS STRONGLY PRO-WESTERN AND PRO-AMERICAN HAVING FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS (ESPECIALLY IN THE 1950'S) MAINTAINED CLOSE CONTACT WITH VARIOUS OFFICIALS OF THE EMBASSY. TSATSOS WAS AN IVP LEADER GRANTEE IN 1953 WHEN HE SPENT FOUR MONTHS IN THE U.S.
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